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Department Of Homeland Security Citizen Corps Mobilized To Assist With Hurricane Disaster Support

Washington, DC - Citizen Corps Councils and national Citizen Corps affiliate organizations mobilized more than 2,600 volunteers and representatives from 48 states to provide disaster support to communities affected by Hurricanes Charley, Frances, and Ivan. In addition, Citizen Corps Councils and volunteer members already established within Florida are supporting state coordinated disaster relief efforts.

This first-ever nationwide activation of Citizen Corps members expands the mission of Citizen Corps from a locally based program to a national resource. By tapping Citizen Corps members who have received first aid or disaster response training and who volunteer in their communities, the state and federal response system has an additional resource for large-scale disasters. In addition to the 5,038 FEMA staff in Florida, emergency response personnel have been deployed from the U.S. Forest Service, the Coast Guard, Health and Human Service, Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Transportation and Department of Defense.

"Citizen Corps Councils across the country have been working hard to educate and train citizens in emergency preparedness and response skills and to engage citizens in supporting emergency services within their community. We, at the Department of Homeland Security, are proud to see so many local Citizen Corps participants responding so enthusiastically to the need for help in Florida," said C. Suzanne Mencer, Executive Director of the Office

of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness. "Citizens across America play an important role in making our communities safer and better prepared and they are a critical resource in responding to events like this - the work of Citizen Corps is definitely paying off."

The recent devastation from the hurricanes reinforce the importance of citizen preparedness. September is National Preparedness Month and Citizen Corps Councils across the country are hosting and participating in more than 175 events to raise awareness about the importance of community emergency preparedness, including family preparedness, training, and volunteer support for local emergency responders. These events include: participation in state fairs, promotions at local retail stores, local media public service announcements, 9-11 memorial ceremonies, events at the State capitols, safety demonstrations, disaster drills, preparedness lectures and workshops, and door-to-door distribution of preparedness materials.

Citizen Corps is the Homeland Security Department's nationwide grass-roots program created to actively involve Americans in making communities safer, stronger and better prepared for all emergencies including a terrorist attack. Fifty percent of the U.S. population is now served by nearly 1,400 state, county, local and tribal Citizen Corps Councils, which provide opportunities for citizens to participate in a wide range of homeland security activities that help make their families, their homes, and their communities safer from threats of crime, terrorism, and disasters of all kinds.

The Department of Homeland Security disseminates information about emergency preparedness through its Ready Campaign, a national public service advertising campaign produced by the Ad Council. Visit www.Ready.gov for more information. For more information about Citizen Corps and National Preparedness Month, visit www.citizencorps.gov.

From the Program Coordinator's Desk by Gary Zulinski

Report on: Citizen Corps Hurricane Deployment

Hurricane Charley had just hit Florida and Frances was bearing down to also strike. FEMA has 27 active disasters and were stretched pretty thin with assistance. FEMA contacted Liz DiGregorio, Director of Citizen Corps, Office of Domestic Preparedness, Department of Homeland Security, for assistance from Citizen Corps. Liz contacted FEMA Region V specialists Jim Opoka and the plan was quickly formed and approved to call on representatives from National, State and Local Citizen Corps to conduct a national call out of Citizen Corps and affiliate program members to assist with the Florida hurricanes.

Jim Opoka called me late Friday, September 3, 2004 requesting me to travel to FEMA Region V headquarters in Chicago to assist in this national call-out. I flew to Chicago early Saturday, September 4, 2004 and met at FEMA Region V Headquarters, Regional Operation Center (ROC). Also assembled were several emergency managers and staff from several Illinois counties. We were quickly briefed on our mission to have 1000 volunteers within 48 hours and 2000 within 7 days, for a two-week deployment. The volunteers went to Atlanta Georgia for training and deployment to the hurricane ravaged areas of Florida.

We were all sworn in as FEMA employees. I was appointed as Deputy Director of the operation. The group broke into areas of Operations, Logistics, Planning, and Finance. We started at 7:30am CDT, and quickly drafted the necessary documents for the call-out. Immediately after headquarters approved the documents, the announcement went out to 3,100 state, local, CERT, and affiliate contacts. By 8:30pm CDT thirteen Citizen Corps volunteers were traveling to Atlanta.

Over the next two weeks, working 12-14 hours per day. We called out an additional 500 volunteers for a 4-6 week deployment and processed 3363 volunteers that were sent to Atlanta for training and eventual deployment to Florida, and other states affected by the hurricanes. Michigan sent to Atlanta 74 volunteers for the two-week deployment and 8 for the 4-6 week deployment. During this deployment

Hurricane Ivan struck Florida and Hurricane Jeanne was also on a course to strike Florida. Within 30 days, 4 major hurricanes have struck Florida and caused billions of dollars in damages.

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Citizen Corps And Operation Hope To Form Partnership

Release Date: September 27

Mencer to highlight the importance of financial emergency preparedness and recovery
Washington, DC -- In a signing ceremony today, C. Suzanne Mencer, Executive Director of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of State and Local Government Coordination & Preparedness (SLGCP), announced a key partnership between Citizen Corps and Operation HOPE, Inc. to promote financial and economic education for disaster planning and recovery.

"With this partnership in place, we can increase awareness of the importance of financial planning and bring resources to bear during disaster recovery," said Mencer.

Immediately following the signing ceremony, Operation HOPE unveiled the Emergency Financial First Aid Kit (EFFAK) to help users identify and organize key financial records. The EFFAK will be used to educate the public on financial emergency preparedness and recovery. The EFFAK will be available on the Operation HOPE website and the websites of corporate sponsors. To download a copy of the EFFAK, please see the Operation HOPE website at www.operationhope.org. A Spanish

version of the EFFAK is also being prepared for a future release.

Citizen Corps is the Department of Homeland Security's nationwide grass-roots effort that actively involves Americans in making communities safer, stronger and better prepared for all emergencies. Operation HOPE is America's first nonprofit social investment bank and a national provider of financial literacy and economic empowerment programs. For more information about Citizen Corps, visit www.citizencorps.gov.

Through ongoing collaborations and long-term partnerships with leading government, private sector, and community interests, Operation HOPE works to bring self-sufficiency and a sustained spirit of revitalization to America's inner-city communities. In partnership with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and a network of private and community partners, Operation HOPE's HOPE Coalition America has provided free financial counseling and casework services to more than 1,000 Americans affected by natural disasters and national emergencies in 125 cities in 35 states.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS: ADVICE FROM PROFILED COUNCILS

To complement the guidance provided in Citizen Corps: A Guide for Local Officials, the Citizen Corps Councils profiled here provide their shared view of what it takes to bring Citizen Corps to life and on what success really takes—in action steps, attitude, leadership and support. While these Councils have all taken slightly different approaches toward the Citizen Corps mission, they agree on some basic tips put forth here.

We hope the experiences of these Councils will help others to develop an action plan to get started or to enhance activities already underway!

Don't reinvent the wheel. While some of these Councils began from an existing organization with a similar mission, a common theme to all is the value of drawing on existing local resources. Each of these Councils underscore the importance of using what is already available in the community and coordinating and leveraging those services and programs for greater effectiveness.

- Conduct an inventory of community leaders, civic organizations, and ongoing initiatives that already participate in community safety education, training, and volunteer service
- Get connected with the local and state emergency management agencies to learn about existing emergency operations plans for the jurisdiction
- Reach out to other organizations that work with disasters
- Maintain contacts and engage those who are already active in the Citizen Corps mission
- Participate in state emergency exercises
- If just getting started, consider recruiting a team of 3-5 people to conduct the initial research and planning for the Council

Obtain and maintain broad community representation.

It is crucial to solicit the “buy-in” of the jurisdiction's residents, businesses, officials, and service providers and to identify their role in the strategic plan of the Council – bringing all residents together through the shared goal of a safer community.

- Tap interpersonal relationships
- Explain the benefits of Citizen Corps to constituents groups in ways that are relevant for them
- Have a “kick off” event
- Utilize a broad range of community forums (retirement homes, block watch meetings, businesses, etc.), brochures, displays, and public service announcements to educate people about Citizen Corps
- Recruit academic institutions and other community cornerstones
- Prepare materials in multiple languages
- Be open-minded
- Create a single point of contact to obtain information

Obtain support from local elected officials. Local elected officials are the most visible advocates for the Council. Their support can raise public awareness and attract the attention of state and federal government officials and citizens. Elected official support can also accelerate the development of a Citizen Corps Council and help sustain it.

- Meet one-on-one with elected officials

- Coordinate with existing, related committees or advisory boards to the local elected official(s)
- Discuss ways for the elected official to have a public role in promoting the Citizen Corps activities and the citizen preparedness message
- Have the Citizen Corps mission included in official documents, including executive orders, proclamations, etc.

Be mindful of turf issues. A number of established organizations are already operating throughout our nation to plan against natural disasters and other emergencies. Successful Citizen Corps Councils recognize the value that such an organization has already provided to the community and does not usurp that role but complements it with the broader context of the Council's mission. It is strongly recommended that Citizen Corps Councils work with these organizations to avoid duplication of efforts, address any concerns, and obtain their enthusiastic participation.

- Research your community and its politics
- Engage the leaders of existing organizations in discussions about what the Council will bring to complement, but not compete with, the good work already being done by existing organizations
- If necessary, develop a partnership agreement or Memorandum of Understanding to distinguish roles and responsibilities
- Recognize and articulate that partnership does not exclude maintaining individual organizational identity
- Develop a strategy for joint sponsorship of materials

Have a clear mission of community safety.

Successful Councils develop a clear mission of community safety and security and have articulated a list of principles to guide the Council

- Involve members/stakeholders in articulating a mission statement and goals
- Post the mission statement in a stationary meeting place
- Establish specific contact information for the Council (create an identity)
- Create a Council structure and its components, including by-laws or other guidelines

- Fully develop volunteer opportunities prior to beginning recruitment

Have a Financial Plan. Successful Councils have tapped a wide range of resources to support their efforts (e.g., recruitment, planning, training, public education, materials dissemination, technology), but the one thing in common is that each successful Council actively addresses the need for resources.

- Do not rely solely on federal funding, e.g., Homeland Security/Citizen Corps grants or other competitive grants
- Identify a non-profit agency who can apply for grants on behalf of the Council
- Brainstorm on what in-kind resources are needed and find donors
- Be open to and seek all types of support (e.g., private, non-profits, local government agencies, foundations)
- Be sure to keep good financial records of all related expenditures

Know the community. Successful Councils build on existing community strengths and address the specific preparedness and safety needs of that community.

- Conduct systematic needs assessments
- Seek and obtain input from special needs populations (e.g., elderly, physically or mentally disabled, non-English speakers, low-income)
- Develop specific outreach tools and events to reach all sectors of the community, including faith-based groups, schools, businesses, homeowner's associations, and special needs groups.

Address liability concerns. Successful Councils not only appreciate the benefits of engaging citizens in their own safety planning and disaster preparedness, but they also plan for the reality of liability concerns.

- Review or pursue Good Samaritan legislation
- Provide sufficient training for volunteers
- Be sure citizens understand the scope of their training
- Solicit and address liability concerns raised by first responders
- Jointly engage citizen volunteers and first responders in mock scenarios or tabletop exercises

Institute a volunteer management system.

Whether automated or not, a volunteer management system is essential to ensure ready access to volunteers when they are most needed and coordinating volunteer activities to support the overall mission of the Council.

- Develop volunteer programs and advertise them
- Develop a structure so that anyone can volunteer
- Track volunteer skills and qualifications in an easy to access format for retrieval during an emergency

Have well-respected local champions. Leaders who are committed to the mission of Citizen Corps and who can motivate citizens to take action are critical for success. Be sure your champions also have the time to commit to a sustained campaign!

- Find and secure champions with charisma and a passion for the cause, good public speaking skills, and who are respected, organized, good facilitators and have time to give
- Have spokespersons for designated segments of the community—they should appropriately represent and can speak to the segment identified.
- Support these champions with media interviews and public speaking engagements

Maintain momentum. Clearly, after the terrorist events of 2001, community concern about safety and preparing against natural and manmade disasters skyrocketed. That concern fueled volunteerism. Successful Citizen Corps Councils defeat complacency and sustain community interest and involvement in building stronger communities, even without a seemingly imminent threat.

- Involve all volunteers in ongoing, meaningful, community-building activities
- Regularly communicate with stakeholders, members, and/or volunteers through a newsletter or other communication tool
- Build a continuing education component (e.g., CERT, first aid, search techniques)
- Build a volunteer awards/recognition component
- Maintain a user-friendly Website with relevant and up-to-date information

- Track volunteer contributions to be able demonstrate the value of their efforts
- Openly share information including school, business, and community emergency preparedness plans.

Department of Homeland Security Launches Office of Interoperability and Compatibility

Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge today announced the October 1, 2004, launch of the Office of Interoperability and Compatibility, along with the release of tools designed to help state and local public safety practitioners improve communications interoperability.

The Office of Interoperability and Compatibility (OIC), part of the Science & Technology directorate, will oversee the wide range of public safety interoperability programs and efforts currently spread across Homeland Security. These programs address critical interoperability issues relating to public safety and emergency response, including communications, equipment, training, and other areas as needs are identified.

“This office will ensure that Homeland Security is exercising its leadership role to bring local, state, and federal efforts together in a partnership that is essential to national progress on interoperability,” said Secretary Ridge. “This is a national effort, not a federal effort, and I thank the first responder community for their initiative and collaboration.” Specific responsibilities for the OIC will include:

Supporting the creation of interoperability standards:

Establishing a comprehensive research, development, testing, and evaluation (RDT&E) program for improving public safety interoperability; Identifying and certifying all DHS programs that touch on interoperability; Integrating coordinated grant guidance across all DHS grant-making agencies that touch on public safety interoperability; Overseeing the development and implementation of technical assistance for public safety interoperability; Conducting pilot demonstrations; Creating an interagency interoperability coordination council; and

Coordinating and working closely with the new National Incident Management System (NIMS) Integration Center.

The OIC will help leverage public safety community resources by promoting cooperation across all levels of government and coordination among federal programs and activities related to interoperability. As a central clearinghouse for information about and assistance with interoperability issues, the office will reduce unnecessary duplication in public safety programs and spending, and will identify and promote interoperability best practices in the public safety arena.

Homeland Security is also distributing communications interoperability improvement tools – an “Interoperability Continuum” guide, and Statewide Communications Interoperability Planning methodology – to leaders in all fifty states and fifty high-threat urban areas.

The “Interoperability Continuum,” developed through local and Homeland Security collaboration in ten high-threat urban areas, identifies five critical success factors that communities must consider as they work to improve communications interoperability. The Continuum provides guidance for increasing frequency of use of equipment, creating a joint governance structure, developing standard operating procedures, integrating technology solutions with existing systems, and conducting training and exercises. The methodology for Statewide Communications Interoperability Planning grew out of Homeland Security work in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

For more information about Michigan Citizen Corps, contact the Program Coordinator, Gary Zulinski at (517) 241-3867 or zulinskig@michigan.gov.

We all have a role in Hometown Security

Citizen Corps asks you to embrace the personal responsibility to be prepared; to get training in first aid and emergency skills; and to volunteer to support local emergency responders, disaster relief, and community safety